

Report of the EarthLight Bookstore Project

Year 4: 2016-2017

In March of 2012, the EarthLight board decided to engage in book and media sales on-site at meetings and gatherings, changing from a magazine publisher into a sales operation to serve Friends, environmentalists, and storytellers. Tom and Sandy Farley rejoined the board to help manage the project. EarthLight secured a resale permit, credit card processing system, and simple inventory software. After the close of the AFSC bookstore, Pacific Yearly Meeting approved our service as bookstore providers at its sessions, as long as the relationship is satisfactory to both parties.

The Earthlight Bookstore operates as a “pop-up” store, bringing books, other tangible media and products both useful and playful to places where readers are gathered. The portable stock is selected to match the interests of events to which EarthLight is invited. For example:

- Environment, Earthcare, eco-justice
- Progressive peace and justice issues
- Quaker thought and history; resources for Quaker in-reach and out-reach
- Religious education for children
- Resources for teens, young adults, parents, caregivers
- Resources for storytellers and listeners (including puppets!)
- Yearly and Quarterly meeting publications, directories and *Faith and Practice*.
- Materials on consignment from “Reach and Teach”, authors, and performers

Since the beginning of our project, we have brought materials to the following events:

- College Park and Southern California Quarterly Meetings
- Pacific and North Pacific Yearly Meeting annual sessions
- Bay Area Storytelling Festival and Southbay Storytellers & Listeners

As resources permit, EarthLight will continue to attend these major events. In addition, we have plans to visit more individual Monthly Meetings, as we did for a Quaker Quest workshop at Palo Alto Meeting. We would like to arrange a series of visits within a geographic area over a period of a month or so. Meetings would be asked to provide a space to set up the store, publicity in and outside the local Quaker community and optional overnight housing for the bookseller. We would recruit booksellers to “ride the circuit” carrying appropriate stock; this summer two Young Adult Friends have expressed interest and have blocks of time free to take on this work.

EarthLight hopes to develop a closer collaboration with its parent PYM Unity with Nature Committee, expanding into sales at environmental conferences and festivals, and improving the range of environmental offerings for sale at Quaker events.

So far, EarthLight’s transformation to a non-traditional bookstore has been successful: we have paid down all debt remaining from magazine publishing, and we have money in the bank for new ventures like “circuit riding” bookselling. However, to become sustainable, we need human resources:

- More and younger members of the Board of Directors
- Website upgrade and management
- Young (and older) Friends to be short-term “circuit riding” booksellers
- People who want to learn the craft of commercial bookselling

- Tom and Sandy Farley, Eric Sabelman, Muriel Strand [EarthLight board]